



## **STARVED ROCK & MATTHIESSEN STATE PARK(s)**

*for students, educators, scout leaders, staff, interns, and volunteers.*

### **Table of Contents:**

- ❖ **Natural History of Starved Rock 2-8**
  - Geology
  - Flora
  - Fauna
- ❖ **Legends of Starved Rock 8-9**
  - The Legend of Starved Rock
  - The Legend of Lover's Leap
- ❖ **Native American History of the Starved Rock Region 10-14**
- ❖ **The French in the Starved Rock Region 14-16**
- ❖ **Archaeology 17-19**
  - Starved Rock
  - Zimmerman Site
  - Hotel Plaza
- ❖ **Early Years and Property History 20-21**
  - Daniel Hitt
  - Ferdinand Walther
  - State of Illinois
- ❖ **Civilian Conservation Corps 21-22**
- ❖ **Plum Island and Leopold Island 22**
- ❖ **The Illinois Waterway 23-26**
  - ❖ Illinois and Michigan Canal 23-24
  - ❖ Starved Rock Lock and Dam 25-26
- ❖ **Matthiessen State Park 26-28**
  - ❖ Geology
  - ❖ Ecology
  - ❖ History
- ❖ **Halfway House/Sulphur Springs Hotel 29**
- ❖ **Illinois Department of Natural Resources 30-32**
- ❖ **Starved Rock Foundation 33**
- ❖ **Educational Resources for Reference 34**

## **NATURAL HISTORY OF STARVED ROCK**

<https://isgs.illinois.edu/outreach/geology-resources/glaciers-smooth-surface>

### **Geology**

Starved Rock, now mostly appreciated as a state park for its natural beauty, has a wealth of prehistoric and historic importance. About 600 million years ago, Northern Illinois was part of a broad upland that was undergoing extensive erosion. The erosion wore the land down to near sea level. Erosion that forms a near-sea level surface is called a peneplain. This peneplain was submerged several times by sea water and several layers of sediment were laid on the surface.

The drainage was totally different from today's drainage system. There was a major north-south river located about 30 miles west of Starved Rock. There was also a major east-west river about 90 miles south of the rock. The north-south river was the predecessor to the Mississippi River and the east-west river was one of its tributaries.



<https://isgs.illinois.edu/outreach/geology-resources/build-illinois-last-500-million-years>

### **Glaciers**

Starved Rock State Park was once covered with 3000-5000 feet of glacial ice. This ice was part of the continental glacier which invaded this region several times in the past 700,000 years. Maximum thickness of this glacier has been estimated at up to two miles thick.

Glacial ice can only move forward, never backward. When a glacier is said to be retreating, it is actually melting faster than it is moving forward. If the ice moves forward faster than it melts, it is said to be advancing. If it melts at about the same rate as it is moving forward, then it appears to be stagnant and the forward motion of the ice has stopped.

As glacial ice can only move forward, it picks up rocks and carries them within the ice. When the ice melts, these rock particles are dropped at the point of melting. All dropped rock

material is called drift. Drift found at the point of melting is called till. Till is unsorted glacial drift. When the glacier is stagnant, the drift accumulates into a pile called an end moraine. After the glacier has retreated, it leaves a range of irregular hills which are the end moraines. The Marseilles Moraine and the Farm Ridge Moraine are two of the closest moraines to the Starved Rock Region. The meltwater of the glacier was so great in volume that it would accumulate behind the moraines and form vast lakes. The Kankakee Torrent was produced from one of these glacial lakes that broke through the Farm Ridge Moraine and flooded the area creating the Illinois Valley. The streams that drained these lakes were gigantic compared to today's streams. The Illinois Valley was formed by one of these streams.

## **Rocks**

All rocks found at Starved Rock are sedimentary rocks, but for a few glacial erratic's found on the trail (granite boulder on bluff trail from French to Wildcat Canyon). Sedimentary rocks are formed from deposits of pre-existing rocks or pieces of once-living organism that accumulate on the Earth's surface. If sediment is buried deeply, it becomes compacted and cemented, forming sedimentary rock. Most of the rocks were formed along the bottom of a sea which existed in Illinois about 460 million years ago, during a time period called the Ordovician Period of the Pennsylvania Era.

Sandstone is a soft rock made of a hard mineral. You can often crumble sandstone with your bare hand, but if you look at the sand with a hand lens, you see frosted, well-rounded grains of a mineral, quartz, that rates 7 out of 10 on the hardness scale. Because the grains are not very well cemented together, it is very susceptible to erosion by wind, water and biological activity, resulting in the sculpted shapes you see here. Exposed surfaces of the rock appear to be red in color because of the iron particles which have been concentrated on the surface due to evaporation and leaching.

The St. Peter Sandstone, being extremely pure quartz, is used for the manufacture of glass, filter and molding sand, as an abrasive, and in the hydrofracturing of oil and gas wells. For this reason, there are several glass factories and quarries located in the Starved Rock region.

## St. Peter Sandstone (Sedimentary)



➤ St. Peter Sandstone was formed during the Paleozoic Era in the Middle Ordovician Period, 450 Million years ago. Sediment was deposited in shallow seas covering most of the United States.

### Texture

Very fine grained and well sorted sandstone.

### Minerals

Consists almost entirely of mineral quartz. It is mined in many parts of the Midwest as raw material for glass manufacturing, silica sand for abrasive uses, and for foundries to make sand castings (Geology, 2014).



## Formations

Formations are successive units of rock that have some degree of uniformity or are characterized by distinctive rock features. The dominant rock formation at Starved Rock is St. Peter Sandstone, which is named for the St. Peter River in Minnesota, now called the Minnesota River. A formation can be divided into members. A member is defined as a persistent subdivision of a formation that can be distinguished from adjacent parts of the formation. The St. Peter Sandstone is subdivided into the Kress, Tonti and Starved Rock members. The Kress Member appears as layers of sheet green and white shale, white claystone, sandstone, and conglomerate. The Tonti Member is fine-grained sandstone. It can be viewed at the lower ledge above the river at Starved Rock. The Starved Rock Member is made of coarser sand than the Tonti Member, and can be found at Lover's Leap, and all of Starved Rock, but for the lower 20 feet.

The numerous canyons that are prominent features at the park were carved in the bedrock by water as upland streams drained into the Illinois River. About 16,000 years ago, a catastrophic flood, known as the Kankakee Torrent, surged through this region as melt water from glaciers was released. When the flood receded, much of the landscape had been scoured down, exposing the bedrock of St. Peter Sandstone, including Starved Rock. Five miles east of here the same stone is exposed at Buffalo Rock State Park. To the west, however, beyond Split Rock, the bedrock is buried 1,000 feet below the surface.

The layers of St. Peter Sandstone appear to be horizontal, but they are actually dipping slightly toward the east. The rocks at Starved Rock State Park form the east limb of an asymmetrical anticline called the LaSalle Anticline. An anticline is a group of rock strata bent upward due to folding, as in the form of an arch.

Rock strata that are exposed at the surface are called outcrops. Wind, rain, plants and animals all combine in a process called weathering, which breaks down the rocks. The particles of which a rock consists are held together by a mineral precipitant called cement. This cement is usually either silica, calcic, or iron. Not all parts of the rock contain equal amounts of cement; thus, some are more firmly cemented than others. As a result of this, the outcrop is not uniform. The weaker parts break away more easily. This is called differential weathering. It is this differential weathering that maintains the vertical walled canyons. The upper part of the formations are more firmly cemented than the lower part, so the upper part shields the lower part from decay. If it did not, the sandstone would become a sand hill.



18 canyons and 7 overlooks encompass the Starved Rock State Park area today. 8 of those canyons are open to visitors along GREEN marked interior canyon trails: Estimates, we are working on new measurements.

- French Canyon 45 foot waterfall
- Wildcat Canyon 75-90 foot waterfall (varying reports)
- LaSalle Canyon 25 foot waterfall
- Ottawa Canyon 45 foot waterfall
- Kaskaskia Canyon 25 foot waterfall
- St. Louis Canyon 80 foot waterfall
- Tonty Canyon 60 foot waterfall CLOSED
- Illinois Canyon 2 foot waterfall/pool

Overlooks:

- Starved Rock 125 ft. above river
- Lovers Leap
- Eagle Cliff Overlook

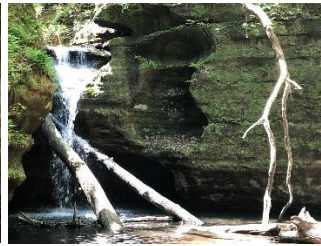
- Beehive Overlook
- Sandstone Point
- Owl Canyon Overlook CLOSED
- Hennepin Canyon Overlook



Starved Rock



Ottawa Canyon



Kaskaskia Canyon



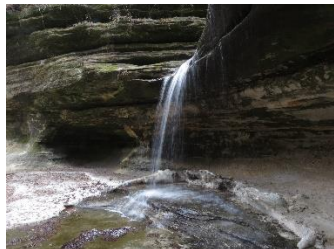
Lovers Leap



Eagle Cliff Overlook



French Canyon



LaSalle Canyon



Tonti Canyon



St. Louis Canyon



Aurora Canyon



Wildcat Canyon



Illinois Canyon

## Flora

Starved Rock State Park has a large diversity of plant life. Most notable are the trees; the park is a mix of coniferous and deciduous forest. Naturally occurring are a variety of oak species, identified by their many-lobed leaves and acorns. Trees with compound leaves, such as hickories, walnuts, and ashes, are also prevalent. Coniferous tree species like white pine, Canada yew, red, and white cedar can be found along the canyon walls, and outcrops. While some of the white pines

may have been established naturally when seeds were brought south from advancing glaciers, most of the pines found at the park were planted by the Civilian Conservation Corps to help prevent erosion of the land along the Illinois River.

Many native wildflowers can also be found throughout the park. One of note is harebell, a delicate, small plant with narrow leaves and lavender petals in groups of five. This plant is specifically adapted to growing in sandy soils and can often be seen growing on the slopes of Starved Rock, Lover's Leap and Eagle Cliff. Other species that can be found along the trails include columbine, tall bellflower, jewelweed, Virginia bluebells, trillium, and more. Several species of ferns, which do not produce flowers but instead reproduce by microscopic spores, can also be seen along the trails. They often grow in shady, moist locations close to the waterfalls.

One of the most prominent species in the park has gained notoriety from an old adage warning of its itchy reputation: "Leaves of three, let it be." This describes poison ivy, which will always develop its leaves in groups of three, regardless of the form it takes. This versatile plant can grow as a ground cover, a climbing vine, a shrub, or even as a small tree. Many animals use this plant as shelter or food, and humans are one of the few species for which the plant triggers an allergic reaction. It produces an oil called urushiol, which, when exposed to skin, will often produce a red, itchy rash. If you think you have been exposed to poison ivy, wash the affected area with soap and water as soon as possible to break down the oil.

A wide variety of mushrooms, lichens, and moss occur at the park thanks to the cool and damp sandstone along the canyon walls and outcrops. Scale like green plants called liverworts creep along the wet canyon walls and can be seen up close at places like French Canyon. Liverworts, like mosses, are land plants that do not have a vascular system. The lack of vein like tubes to conduct moisture and nutrients throughout the plant limits them to a small size. Like ferns, they produce spores instead of seeds. Their form of reproduction usually requires them to be in wet or moist places like the canyon walls found at Starved Rock and Matthiessen state parks.

## **Fauna**

A wide diversity of wildlife frequent the woodlands, prairies, river, canyons, and wetlands found at Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks. White pelicans migrate through every March and stay through November. They can be seen bobbing along the surface of the Illinois River searching for fish. Another large bird the wild American turkey can be found roaming the woodlands at both parks in search of nuts and berries as it forages through the leaf litter. Other migratory birds such as tanagers, warblers, chats, cuckoos, and cormorants can be seen and heard through the spring and summer months at Starved Rock and Matthiessen state parks.

Bald eagles have been sighted in the park on occasion, particularly during severe winters. The northern eagles' main flyway is the upper Mississippi River; however, in severe winters, when water freezes over, they go in search of open water. The water below the Starved Rock Dam does not freeze because of the turbulence generated through the dam. This serves as an excellent fish buffet for the bald eagle.

Other residents of the area include mammals like the white-tailed deer, gray and red foxes, groundhogs, striped skunk, opossum, chipmunks, ground squirrels, voles, moles, beaver, and even river otter!

Amphibians thrive in the park's wetland areas at the west entrance, canyon creeks, Matthiessen Lake, and along the shallow wide waters of the Illinois and Vermillion Rivers. A few of those species found in the park are the tiger salamander, northern leopard frog, cricket frog, chorus frog, green frog, bull frog, wood frog, grey tree frog, and the American toad.

Reptiles like the common water snake, garter snake, rat snake, and little brown snake can be found sunning themselves along the outcrops or crawling through the leaf debris on the forest floor. Other reptiles to note are the snapping turtle, painted turtle, and spiny softshell turtles found in the Illinois River.

Fish such as the bullhead catfish, long nosed gar, short nosed gar, black spotted crappie, bluegill, sunfish, carp (and invasive Asian carp), sauger, muskie, and more swim the waters of the Illinois River at the park.

### **The Legend of Starved Rock**

IDNR YouTube Video: Starved Rock Snap Shot, Legend of Starved Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5shZhiyk6Q>



Chief Pontiac of the Ottawa Tribe

The name Starved Rock comes from a legendary incident that was said to have occurred in the year 1769. According to legend, the Illinois tribe was trapped on the summit of Starved Rock, surrounded by their enemies the Odawa (Ottawa) and Potawatomi tribes. Unable to obtain food or water, the Illinois were said to have died on the summit of Starved Rock.

The story begins in Cahokia, Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. It was there in 1769 that the Odawa chief Pontiac was killed by an Illinois Indian at a trading post. Learning of his death, Pontiac's allies, the Odawa and Potawatomi, allegedly came to Illinois to

avenge his murder. According to the legend, the two tribes chased the Illinois to the top of the sandstone butte (now called Starved Rock). When it was over, the Illinois Indians were said to have no longer existed.

What do we know about the Odawa, Potawatomi, and Illinois Indians? In 1769 the Odawa Indians lived in northern Michigan and fished in Lake Michigan and other inland lakes. One group of Odawa lived near Toledo, Ohio. The Potawatomi Indians had left their villages in southern Michigan and migrated into today's state of Illinois. They lived in small villages along rivers and creeks of northern Illinois and in wooded areas called groves where they hunted and fished, and grew, corn. In 1769, the Illinois Indians lived in southern Illinois, hundreds of miles from Starved Rock. The Illinois were mainly farmers who lived in large agricultural villages along major rivers where they grew corn, squash, and beans.

Although the legend of Starved Rock is well known, there is no credible evidence that the Illinois Indians were killed at Starved Rock after the death of Pontiac. What is known is that the Illinois continued to live in southern Illinois until 1832 when they sold their remaining land to the United States government and moved to today's Kansas.

You will not find any fact based, hard evidence of the total extermination of the Illinois. However, there are a few accounts of the alleged battle on top of the "rock" told by Chiefs who experienced the occurrence. Meachelle, an old Pottawatomie chief told his side of the story to Judge J.D. Caton in 1833. According to Caton, "Meachelle was present at the siege and the final catastrophe, and although a boy at the time, the terrible event made such an impression on his young mind that it ever remained fresh and vivid" (Mark Walcynski, *Massacre 1769: The Search for the Origin of the Legend of Starved Rock*). Chief Meachelle claimed that the Illinois were extinguished and no more after this battle. According to Judge Caton the tale was true. Henry Schoolcraft, who explored the area near Starved Rock in 1821 also gave an account of the legendary battle on top of "the rock". He supposedly found fragments of antique pottery and stones that he claimed to have belonged to the Illini and therefore supported the legend. Fur traders, settlers, and visitors of the rock years later gave secondary accounts of what they saw. Most of them claimed to have seen bones of the defeated Illinois. Dr. J.H Goodell states in his article that an early settler, Simon Crosiar, told him that the ground of Starved Rock was literally covered with human bones (Walcynski).

Several versions of the "Legend" have been told over the past few hundred years. Some say Pontiac was stabbed to death at a conference near present day Joliet, Illinois by a Peoria brave who was hired by the British to silence Pontiac's attempts to stop trade between the British and various Native American tribes in the region. All versions state that the Ottawa and

Potawatomie attacked the Illinois village across from the “rock” and the remaining Illinois fled across the river to seek refuge on top of the sandstone butte, but the Ottawa and Potawatomie returned and surrounded the rock eventually starving out the Illinois trapped on top. One version mentions several Illinois braves who escaped by hiding at night on a sandstone ledge then stealing enemy canoes and paddling downriver where they told their tale.

### **The Legend of Lover’s Leap**

Lover’s Leap was named from a legend that contends an Illinois boy and a Potawatomi girl from enemy tribes met and fell in love. Since the two tribes were at war, neither chief would allow them to marry. Since they were forbidden to be with one another in life, they proceeded to the cliff, joined hands, and jumped off so they could be together for all eternity in death.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY OF STARVED ROCK**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SkG-0MVRDc>

IDNR YouTube Video: Starved Rock Snap Shot, Native American History Timeline

### **Native American History**

Archaeologists have found evidence of humans living in the area now known as Starved Rock as far back as 8000 B. C. or 10,000 years ago. These were known as the Paleo Indians and later the Archaic people. They lived, for the most part, by hunting and gathering. From 8,000 BC until 1673 various kinds of people, such as the Hopewellian, Woodland and Mississippian cultures frequented the area. The Illinois Confederation during the 1400’s through the 1800’s was divided into sub-tribes, the better known ones being the Kaskaskia, Peoria, Cahokia, and Tamaroa. The Kaskaskia village known as La Vantum by the French extended along the north bank of the river directly across from the park with an estimate of 500-600 houses in the village by 1675. The cabin like dwellings known as wigwams were of small, rectangular shape, constructed of wooden poles and covered in mats made of rushes (grass like plants that grow in wetland areas). They had one doorway, a central fireplace that served as a source of heat for warmth and cooking as well as lighting.

### **The Illinois Confederation**

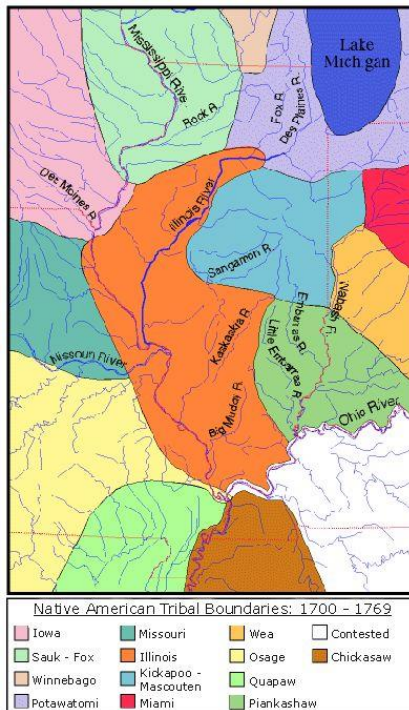
IDNR YouTube: Starved Rock Snap Shot, Illinois Confederation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyFqU6dftSs>

The Illinois Alliance consisted of, at the time of first French contact with the tribe, about twelve subtribes. Some of these subtribes included the Kaskaskia, Peoria, Tamaroa, Cahokia, and Michigamea. The Illinois called this inter-tribal alliance, *Inokha*. During the 1670s the Illinois appear to have numbered between 9,000 and 10,000 people. They occupied a territory that, at times spread from modern-day Missouri to near the shores of Lake Michigan, north into today’s Wisconsin and as far south as the

Arkansas River. In 1673, the Kaskaskia subtribe of the Illinois alliance lived along the Illinois River and across the river and upstream from Starved Rock.

Between 1673 and 1680, numerous Illinois subtribes joined the Kaskaskia at their village. By 1677 the village population grew to between 7,000 and 8,000 inhabitants. The village was abandoned by the Illinois in 1691 when the Illinois groups relocated to Lake Peoria. In 1700, the Kaskaskia left Lake Peoria and established themselves first in present St. Louis, Missouri, and then, in 1703, along the Kaskaskia River in Randolph County, Illinois. By the mid-1700s all Illinois subtribes lived in settlements along the Mississippi in Southern Illinois. In 1832, the Illinois sold their remaining land to the United States government and relocated to the Osage River in Kansas where they were joined by the Wea and Piankashw (Miami subtribes) in 1854, becoming the Consolidated Peoria tribe. In 1868, the Consolidated Peoria moved to Miami, Oklahoma where they became the Peoria Indian tribe of Oklahoma.



## Culture

The Illinois lived in a seasonal cycle related to cultivation of domestic plants and hunting, moving from semi-permanent summer villages to winter hunting camps, and then returning to summer villages in the spring. Their summer “cabins,” as the French called them, were constructed of reed mats that could be disassembled and carried to new village sites. They planted maize (corn), beans, and squash, known as the "Three Sisters". They prepared dishes such as sagamite, a combination of domestic vegetables that was oftentimes mixed with animal fat or meat. Plum Island located west of the Starved Rock Lock and Dam was once an agricultural field and garden for the local Illinois tribes. They also gathered wild foods such as nuts, fruit, roots, and tubers. During the summer, the Illinois participated in the summer bison hunt, which lasted between three to five weeks. Illinois men also hunted deer, elk, and bear.

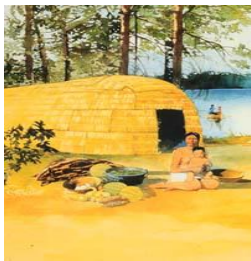
Illinois women prepared the meat for preservation by drying thin strips of meat over a low temperature fire, essentially making jerky from the flesh. They also prepared skins for weapons, clothes, blankets, and more. The surrounding woodlands, wetlands, and prairies were their one stop super wal-mart with groceries, hardware, clothing, pharmacy, and more.

### **Where did the Illinois live?**

The Illinois were original inhabitants of modern-day Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Iowa. The Illinois tribe lost a considerable number of people during the late 1700's and early 1800's due to disease and illness unknowingly introduced by European explorers and settlers.

### **Shelter**

The Illinois lived in large rectangular houses with walls made of woven reeds called wigwams and longhouses.



*Wigwam*

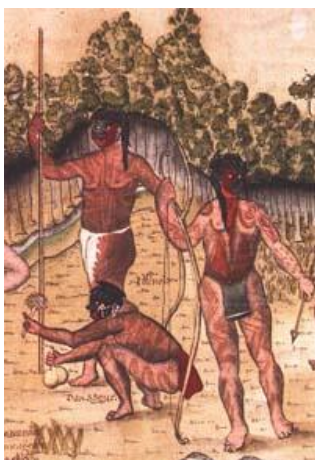


*Kaskaskia*

### **Clothing**

The Illinois sometimes wore a beaded headband with a few colored feathers in it like a wreath on top of the head. Illinois women usually wore their hair in long braids. Illinois men often shaved their hair short on the sides with bangs or a spike of hair on top and long in the back similar to the 1980's mullet or mohawk. The Illinois painted their faces for different occasions, and also tattooed themselves with more permanent designs. French journals record the Illinois as illustrated men and women with tattoos from head to toe.

[http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat\\_amer/post/htmls/id\\_tattoos.html](http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/post/htmls/id_tattoos.html)



## Transportation

The Illinois made dugout canoes by hollowing out large trees such as cottonwood. Over land, the Illinois used dogs as pack animals. There were no horses in North America until colonists brought them over from Europe. The dogs carried backpacks or pulled wooden drag sleds called travois.

## Weapons and Tools

Illinois hunters and warriors used bows and arrows, spears, and clubs made from animal bones, stone, wood, shells, and clay. Metal and guns were later used during the 1600's after trade with the French and British flourished. Illinois men would also use shields of buffalo hide to deflect enemy arrows.



*Line drawing of bison-scapula hoe, composed of the shoulder blade of a bison lashed to a wood handle. (drawing by Frederick Wilson)*

## Recreation

The Illinois tribe was known for their Native American quillwork, beadwork, and embroidery.

The Illinois enjoyed several types of recreation, including a field sport similar to lacrosse and games of chance played with straws or dice. These games were similar to those played by other tribes living in eastern North America. However, different tribes often had different rules for how to play the game or keep score.



*Game of lacrosse being played by members of the Choctaw tribe.*

## **Tribal Interactions**

The Illinois traded with other tribes of the Great Lakes region, and sometimes with more distant tribes. The Illinois fought with many tribes, including the Miami, Iroquois, Sioux, Fox, and Winnebago.

### **THE FRENCH IN THE STARVED ROCK REGION**

IDNR YouTube Video: Starved Rock Snap Shot, Fort St. Louis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iwqF-JQbZPM>

#### **The Jolliet-Marquette Expedition**

During the summer of 1673, Jesuit missionary Jacques Marquette, and French-Canadian fur trader Louis Jolliet, explored the central parts of the Mississippi River, becoming the first people of European descent to do so. Jolliet, Marquette, and five French men paddled from present day St. Ignace, Michigan in two birch bark canoes as far south as an Indian village located on the Arkansas River. Their return trip took them back up the Mississippi and then up the Illinois River. A short distance upstream from Starved Rock, the group stopped at a village of Kaskaskia Indians, a site known today as the Grand Village of the Illinois Historical site, making the first contact with the Indians of today's state of Illinois. The French group continued up the Illinois, later ascending the Des Plaines River. After portaging to the Chicago River, the group paddled to Lake Michigan. Heading north, the French arrived at a Jesuit mission located near today's De Pere, Wisconsin where Marquette remained until October 1674. Jolliet continued on to his trade post at Sault Ste. Marie. Jolliet was the first on record to suggest a canal to bridge the continental divide between the Great Lake and the Illinois River.



Louis Jolliet



Fr. Jacques Marquette

The next Frenchmen to come through this area were Robert Cavalier Sieur de LaSalle, his lieutenant, Henri Tonti, and 20-30 voyageur paddlers. It was their mission to build a chain of forts so King Louis XIV's claim in the new world could be maintained. LaSalle came down the Illinois River around 1678 and stopped at the Kaskaskia village, noted the sandstone butte across the river and continued down to the Peoria area where they built Fort Creve Coeur in 1680. LaSalle left Tonti in charge and went back to Canada to supervise operations. In the spring of the next year, LaSalle heard that there had been trouble with the Native Americans of the area as well as with his

own men. The fort had been destroyed, and all the men had deserted except Tonti, who was later found by LaSalle at the Kaskaskia village. The next few years, LaSalle was involved in a trip down to the Mississippi Delta, which he took possession of for France. On the return journey, his party built Fort Frudhomme near present-day Memphis, Tennessee.

In the winter of 1682-83, LaSalle and his men constructed Fort St. Louis on top of the 125 foot tall sandstone butte known as Starved Rock today. The fort commanded a strategic position on the Illinois River and offered protection to the Illinois people of the area from the marauding Iroquois from the east. The Iroquois hated the French for their intrusion on the land and wanted the Illinois farmland. Many battles occurred during the next 20 years including an attack on the fort which did not succeed.

In the intervening years, a very successful trade flourished between the French and the Illinois. There was an abundant supply of wildlife in the area, including beavers. There was a great demand for beaver pelts in Europe, due to the fur's two different layers and rich oil coating which allowed it to repel water. Beaver hats and coats were in high fashion. The Native Americans would trap and trade beaver pelts for French goods such as beads, blankets, tools, and cloth. The alliance grew between the French and the Illinois while the French manned the fort through 1691. LaSalle seldom stayed in one spot for very long. He went in search of the Mississippi Delta from the Gulf Coast. He overshot the Delta, and he and his party ended up along the Texas coast. LaSalle was murdered in 1687 by members of his own disgruntled party. Tonti went to the Peoria area in 1692 and built a fort at the village of Pimitoui now known as the city of Peoria.

In 1702, a royal proclamation from King Louis XIV ordered Fort St. Louis to be abandoned and trading rights suspended. Both the French and Native American populations moved down to the lower Illinois River and into the Mississippi, eventually settling at the new posts of Cahokia and Kaskaskia. Fort St. Louis was used as a stopover place for hunters and trappers. It was reportedly dismantled in 1720 after being destroyed by fire.

Tonti may have died in 1704 from yellow fever after he travelled south to join the governor of the French colony of Louisiana at Old Biloxi. Another account says he was brought back to the old fort in 1718 by a faithful Native American companion to die. Supposedly, before Tonti died, he buried his fortune of gold, which he had accumulated over the years. He gave a map of its location to a priest, but the priest drowned in a river and the map has never been found.



## Illinois-French-Statehood Timeline

1650's

Increased attacks by the Iroquois tribe drive the Illinois west of the Mississippi River.

1663

France claims title to the unexplored Illinois Country.

1673

Louis Jolliet and Pere Jacques Marquette explore the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. They visit the Illinois village across from Starved Rock.

1681-83

Tonti and LaSalle build Fort St. Louis on top of Starved Rock "Le Rocher" as a French center for trade and diplomacy. Native American tribes return to the area to seek protection from the Iroquois and trade with the French at the fort. It becomes known as LaSalle's Colony.

1712

The Illinois number about 6,730 people. They occupy villages at Starved Rock, Pimetoui, Cahokia, and Kaskaskia.

1717

Illinois Country incorporated into the French colony of Louisiana.

1756

Illinois ally themselves with the French to fight against the British and other tribes allied with the British. Beginning of the French and Indian War.

1760

Illinois becomes part of English rule.

1775

Starved Rock Legend-Chief Pontiac's Death  
Beginning of American Revolution against England.

1783

Treaty of Paris is signed. England gives up the Illinois Country to the United States.

1803

Treaty of Vincennes, Kaskaskia tribe gives up land east of the Mississippi River.

1809

Organization of the Illinois Territory

1818

Treaty of Edwardsville, Peoria tribe/Illinois give up their Illinois territory.  
Illinois becomes a state; Kaskaskia is named it's capitol.

1832

Kaskaskia and Peoria tribes settle on reservation in Kansas. Later moved to current reservation in Oklahoma and became the Greater Peoria Tribe of Oklahoma.

## **ARCHAEOLOGY AT STARVED ROCK**

[http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat\\_amer/post/htmls/arch\\_starv.html](http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/nat_amer/post/htmls/arch_starv.html)

### **Top of Starved Rock/Sandstone Butte**



Archaeological excavations at the Starved Rock site, 1949. Archaeologists passed the excavated sediment through metal screens mounted on wood frames, as seen at the right, to systematize the recovery of artifacts. Illinois State Museum (ISM 195-97)

Excavations were undertaken on Starved Rock in 1947 by the joint Illinois State Museum and University of Chicago crew working at the Zimmerman site. The Museum-University team continued its work on the rock in 1948-1949, and in 1949-1950 it was joined by a crew from the Illinois Department of Public Works and Buildings. Some additional work was conducted at the site in the 1970s and 1980s.



Archaeologist Richard Hagen standing in the excavated cellar (Feature 13) at Starved Rock, 1949. The cellar probably underlay a powder magazine or warehouse built in 1683 as part of La Salle's Fort St. Louis. Strings mark a grid of 5-foot squares used to orient the 1949 excavations. Illinois State Museum (ISM 1957-97)

The Starved Rock excavations uncovered the remains of a long series of prehistoric Native American occupations dating from the late Paleo-Indian period of more than 10,000 years ago to more recent cultural periods. Evidence of La Salle's Fort St. Louis includes numerous artifacts of European manufacture.

The structure burned after the fort was abandoned, partially filling the cellar with charcoal, ash, and building hardware. Eroded sediment then washed into the cellar depression, and several Native American graves were then buried in this fill. One of these, the grave of an infant who died before the age of three, was buried with several strings of glass beads and a leather necklace strung with ten brass Jesuit rings. The Jesuit rings date to a very specific time and indicate that these and other historic graves on Starved Rock are affiliated with the Peoria tribe's 1711-1722 occupation of the site.

## Zimmerman Site/Grand Village of the Kaskaskia



Archaeological excavation at the Zimmerman site, 1947, looking southwest toward Starved Rock.

The Zimmerman site is believed to be the location of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia, which was occupied intermittently by the Kaskaskia and Peoria tribes from 1673 to 1691 and may have been re-occupied by the Peoria in the early 1700s. However, the site's history is complicated by the fact that it also contains the remains of several prehistoric occupations. Archaeologists from the Illinois State Museum and the University of Chicago conducted a joint excavation at Zimmerman in 1947, and the La Salle County Historical Society sponsored three seasons of excavation beginning in 1970. Additional work has been undertaken at the site in connection with the state's acquisition of the property in 1991 and its designation as the Grand Village of the Illinois Historic Site. The site was named for the Clara Zimmerman family, former owners of some of the land on which the site is located.

An historic occupation at Zimmerman called the Danner culture is thought to be affiliated with the Illinois Indians. Danner is recognized by its association with several distinct types of shell-tempered pottery (e.g., Danner Grooved Paddle) and a variety of French trade goods including brass beads, coiled brass hair ornaments, a brass compass, blue glass beads, iron ax heads, iron knives, and an iron tomahawk head. The site also yielded an abundance of traditional artifacts including several kinds of chipped-stone tools (small triangular arrowheads, bifacial knives, scrapers, drills), ground-stone tools (sandstone pendant, sandstone abrader, granite pipe), and tools made of bone or antler (mat needles, awls, shaft wrench, projectile points, bison-scapula hoes, turtle-shell bowl). Other items were native adaptations of European materials, including arrowheads and ornaments (tinkling cones) that were cut and reformed from brass kettles.



Archaeologist Elaine A. Bluhm  
excavating a rock concentration at the  
Zimmerman site, 1947.

Excavators discovered the remains of oval to elongate houses and other residential structures at the Zimmerman site. They found several rock concentrations composed of fire-cracked granitic cobbles that may have been associated with small, dome-shaped sweat lodges.

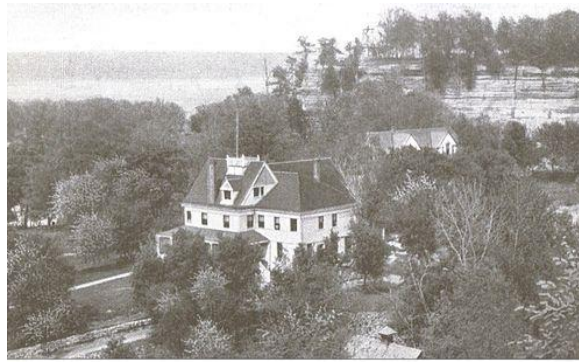
Excavators also found traces of subsurface pits. Some pits were used for food storage and trash disposal, while others were roasting pits evidently used to cook large tubers like the *macopine*. Plant remains confirm that corn, beans, and watermelons were important Illinois crops. Animal remains indicate that bison provided over half the total meat supply, although elk, deer, bear, dog, and fish were also consumed.

<https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/aa.1976.78.4.02a00660>

### **Hotel Plaza/ North of French Canyon entrance**

The Hotel Plaza site reflects a series of occupations going back thousands of years, but the main occupation consists of the late Prehistoric and early Historic periods. There is a book in the Le Rocher bookstore that goes further into depth on this woodland period occupation just before French Canyon.

## Property History



*Starved Rock Hotel 1890-1938*

IDNR YouTube-Starved Rock Snap Shot, Early Years of the Park

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3n4HcWfa9rU>

### Early Years

The British occupied the Illinois Valley and Starved Rock in 1773, while on a geological expedition searching for copper. It wasn't until 1789 when a U.S. Army expedition arrived with Americans mapping the Illinois River.

The land was privately owned by Daniel F. Hitt who purchased it in 1835 from the U.S. Government as part of his settlement for back pay from the Army. He sold Starved Rock and 100 acres in 1890 to Ferdinand Walther for \$15,000 and an option to buy 265 acres more.

Mr. and Mrs. Walther tried to develop the Starved Rock area as the "Gibraltar of the West" in the 1890's. A large frame hotel was located at the base of the south bluff below Starved Rock. You could rent a room for \$3 a night. An artesian fed swimming pool was located just south of Devil's nose by French Canyon cove. The club house contained a dance hall, bowling alley, ice cream parlor, apartments, and a porch and was located within a circle drive approaching the hotel and concession area (where the present day visitor center sits now). Traveling and local bands played at the dance pavilion. A family owned garage with a hand crank gas pump was located south of the pavilion. Most visitors coming to the park at this time traveled from the Chicago area via the inter-urban railway that ran on the other side of the river. A depot was across from the park. Passengers for the park would disembark and then take a ferry boat across the river into French Canyon Cove.

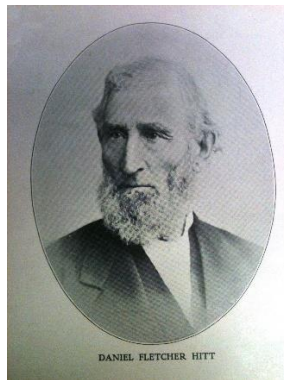
280 acres of land, including Starved Rock, was purchased from the Walthers by the State of Illinois for \$146,000 on June 10, 1911 when the Illinois Parks Commission was petitioned by concerned citizens in the community that the land was going to be sold to the mining industry as a quarry for the St. Peter Sandstone. Starved Rock became the 2<sup>nd</sup> state park in Illinois. Fort Massac in southern Illinois was the first.

In 1918 the park purchased a miniature steam locomotive from Lincoln Park in Chicago. The miniature railroad encircled the artesian fed swimming pool.

The original campground stood where the lodge is located today. The Starved Rock Hotel stood until the new lodge was constructed in the 1930's. It had 3 floors with a complete restaurant on the bottom floor.



The land manager (now known as a superintendent) of Starved Rock State Park was “Officer” P.H. Harbeck. Harbeck would sometimes act as “sheriff of Starved Rock” but dress in the uniform of an English “bobby” style policeman. The Illinois Park Commission managed state parks in Illinois at this time and was the precursor to the Department of Conservation which led to our present-day Department of Natural Resources.



### **Civilian Conservation Corps**

IDNR YouTube Video: Starved Rock Snap Shot, Civilian Conservation Corps

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MLefuBao4ho>

The Civilian Conservation Corps was a federal program (New Deal) developed by President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930's during the Great Depression. The goal was to conserve our natural resources, reforest degraded land, stop soil erosion, and bring the country out of the Depression by putting unemployed male youth to work. The participants earned \$25-35 per month, but they were only able to keep \$5-7 as the rest was sent home to their families to buy food and

clothing. The term of enlistment was 6 months with the opportunity to re-enlist for up to 2 years, which many of the young men did.

There were three different companies stationed at Starved Rock in the seven-year period that the CCC was active. Companies 614, 1609, and 2601 were made up of young men 17-23 years old. Many of the men in these companies came from the local towns of Utica, Oglesby, LaSalle-Peru and Ottawa. The men were housed in barracks at camps located where the park maintenance and visitor center sit today (2601), just off of route 71 where Parkman's Plain/LaSalle Canyon parking lot is today (1609-largest camp), and along the river where the present day boat ramp and picnic area are located (614). They built the Lodge cabins, kitchen, dining room, and main lobby known as the Great Hall complete with a fireplace at a cost of \$200,000. The hotel section was built by private contractors at a cost of \$250,000. Construction occurred from 1927 and was completed in 1939.

The recruits on site, built bridges such as the bridges hikers cross today at Wildcat Canyon and LaSalle Canyon. They also used their skills as masons and carpenters to construct picnic shelters like the one seen at Lone Point Shelter along route 71, Sunrise and Sunset Shelters at the Lodge, and the shelter located by the Visitor Center.

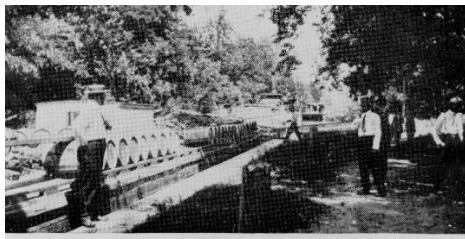


## **Plum and Leopold Islands**

Leopold Island is the small island just below the dam and is owned by the federal government. Plum Island is just down the river from Leopold Island and contains 23 acres. It is privately owned by the Illinois Audubon Society.

Up to 1975, there was an airstrip on Plum Island where small planes would give park visitors a short ride directly over the park. This private concession also had a cable car ride from the park to the island.

Both of these islands provide roosting spots amongst the trees for bald eagles that frequent this area in cold winter months to feed on fish they find in the unfrozen turbulent water just below the dam. Today Plum island supports an active eagle's nest.



Fleet at Illinois and Michigan Canal Lock.  
Photo by Frazer



## The I & M Canal to the Starved Rock Lock and Dam

Illinois Waterway Visitor Center-US Army Corps of Engineers

<https://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Missions/Navigation/Lock-and-Dam-Information/Starved-Rock-Lock-and-Dam/>

Illinois and Michigan Canal Corridor

<https://iandmcanal.org/>

The Illinois & Michigan Canal is the precursor to the Illinois Waterway. The Illinois River was difficult to navigate even by canoe. Possibly inspired by the Canal du Midi being constructed in France, Joliet was the first person to recognize the need for a canal in 1673. The dream of the canal underpinned Illinois' foundation as a state. It was used as a bargaining chip to gain the territory its statehood in 1818 and was responsible for moving Illinois' border about 60 miles north from the southern tip of Lake Michigan. When the Erie Canal connected the Great Lakes to the Eastern seaboard of the early United States in 1825, the I&M Canal efforts increased. The Illinois and Michigan Canal was the first massive internal improvement project in Illinois and was built between 1836 and 1848 at a cost of \$9.5 million. It connected Lake Michigan via the Chicago River with the Illinois River to LaSalle. This connected New York to New Orleans through the heart of the continent, making the canal the link that integrated the primary trade networks of interior North America and led to Chicago's rise. The canal was 96 miles long, 6 feet deep, 60 feet wide and had a series of 15 locks, each 110 feet long and 18 feet wide. The towpath is a trail for the animals, such as mules, that pulled the packet boats and is now a hiking and biking trail. Passengers paid 6 cents per mile to make the 22 hour journey from Chicago to LaSalle. The boats carried lumber, pork, wheat, coal, and machinery, and were responsible for the creation and growth of Chicago and many other cities along the canal's route such as Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, and LaSalle-Peru. It also made Midwest agriculture profitable, by connecting it to the East Coast markets, and rapidly transformed the landscape of the Midwest. The canal was an immediate success in transportation, and through its toll charges and leasing of unused land, was also a financial success.

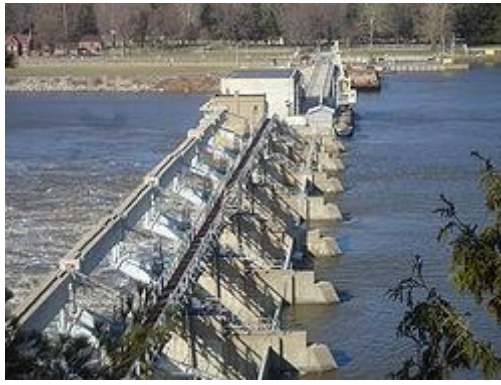
Six years after opening the canal, the Rock Island Railroad was competing for passenger and freight traffic, effectively ending passenger lines on the canal. Transportation on the Illinois River remained difficult. From LaSalle to the Mississippi River, the Illinois River had a minimum depth of 2 feet, which in most cases was sufficient for navigation; wooden locks and dams were constructed downriver in the 1870s, which ushered in the peak years of the I&M Canal.

In 1860, the city of Chicago deepened the canal so it could flush the Chicago River. In 1892, construction was begun on the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal, making a larger waterway to get sewage to the Illinois River at Joliet. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the canal was heavily polluted.

By 1905, the I & M Canal was becoming a remnant of a by-gone era, although some freight and recreational use was made of it until the early 1930s when the Illinois Waterway opened and replaced it.

In 1974, the canal was transferred to the Department of Natural Resources for the development of a recreational area to be used for hiking, bicycling, canoeing, picnicking, fishing and snowmobiling.

The Illinois & Michigan National Heritage Area was established in 1984 when Congress enacted legislation that recognized the area's unique contributions to the nation's development. The 1984 law specified that the corridor's cultural, historic, natural, recreational and economic resources will be retained, enhanced and interpreted for the benefit and inspiration of present and future generations. The Canal Corridor Association, was designated by Congress in 2006 as the local coordinating entity for the I&M Canal National Heritage Area. They operate a visitor center and mule-pulled canal boat tour in LaSalle that shares the history of the I&M Canal.



Starved Rock Lock and Dam

## **The Illinois Waterway**

The Illinois River is formed at the junction of the Kankakee and Des Plaines Rivers in Grundy County, Illinois. It flows 272 miles through north central Illinois where it joins the Mississippi at Grafton, IL.

The Starved Rock Lock and Dam is part of a “water stairway” that connects Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. Prior to 1933, navigation on the river was extremely difficult. The Henry and Copperas Creek locks and dams were dismantled around 1928 after the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal (CSSC) was finished in 1900 because they were not tall enough for the full capacity of water from the CSSC. Kampsville and the first LaGrange locks and dams needed to be adjusted to make them taller.

Four locks on the Illinois River predate the Illinois Waterway and were built to be an extension of the I&M Canal between the 1860s and the 1890s; Henry, Copperas Creek, LaGrange #1, and Kampsville. Henry and Copperas Creek were removed in the 1920s.

In 1920, The State of Illinois authorized 20 million dollars for the construction of five locks and dams. However, by 1929, the state had spent 80% of the funds but only completed 70% of the project. The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers took over and completed the project in 1933. The five new locks, along with two older locks and dams (Kampsville and LaGrange,) completed an eight-lock system called the Illinois Waterway, The Illinois Waterway linked the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River through four natural rivers and three manmade canals.

An average water depth of 18” combined with many sets of rapids and a river drop of 160 feet from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River. Today’s locks are capable of handling eight barges and a towboat in one lockage or one towboat and 15 barges in two lockages.

Today, eight locks and dams make the river navigable and transition boats through a 160 ft elevation change. The Starved Rock Lock and Dam is number 6 in a series of 8 coming down from Lake Michigan and was completed in 1933. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers maintains the 200 feet wide and 9 feet deep navigation channel along the 333-mile length of the waterway.

Over, 120 million tons of cargo pass through Illinois Waterway's eight locks. Each lock varies widely in total commodities and dominant cargo so if you combine all eight locks and the cargos total, you can come up with a very hefty number.

Starved Rock Dam also contains a hydroelectric power station operated by the local town of Peru, Illinois and generates a peak of 7,600 kw of electricity.

The Illinois Waterway Visitor Center across the river has displays about lock and dam operations, historical artifacts, the area's history as well as a pilothouse from the M/V John M. Warner towboat. From the observation deck, you can view the working lock.

### **MATTHIESSEN STATE PARK**

IDNR website-Matthiessen State Park page

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/parks/pages/matthiessen.aspx>

#### **Geology**

The many unique and beautiful rock formations exposed in the Upper and Lower Dell areas of Matthiessen State Park are composed primarily of St. Peter Sandstone. The St. Peters Sandstone is an Ordovician formation meaning it was formed 470 million years ago when Illinois was part of an ancient shoreline that bordered a Paleozoic (ancient) sea. Sand from the sea formed layers on the shoreline and over time those layers cemented together creating stone - sandstone.

The Upper Dells begin at Matthiessen Lake and continue through Cascade Falls out to the Vermillion River and is considered a box canyon. The ends of the box canyons mark present day waterfalls and rapids that have retreated by headward erosion up a small creek from the Vermillion River. The canyon system is 1 mile long from the lake to the river .

Closer to the river area you will find limestone overlaying the sandstone, the rocks are folded, and dip steeply toward the river along the west portion of the LaSalle Anticline. As the Illinois River was deepening and cutting cascades through the sandstone, the Vermillion River was deepening and cutting through the overlying strata such as the limestone and dolomite. The rate of the deepening and headward erosion along this unnamed tributary was primarily controlled by the level of the Vermillion River until the tributary had cut down to the sandstone. Falls developed because the sandstone was more resistant to headward erosion than the limestone or dolomite.

As rainwater percolates downward through the sandstone, it dissolves a variety of chemicals and minerals from the sediments and rocks. By the time the groundwater reaches the St. Peter Sandstone it is highly charged with iron as well as other chemicals. Bright yellow, brown, or orange colorations along the canyon walls mark the locations of seeps and springs,

where the water evaporates and the iron precipitates at the surface. Strawberry Rock and Devils Paint Box are two places to see these effects of chemical in water.

Potholes are formed in the sandstone where strong stream currents swirl cobbles and pebbles in eddies. The strong current flushes the sand from the hole. Giant's Bath Tub is a good place to see one of these potholes.

The new "Annex" property was purchased in 2018 through the Illinois Lands Acquisition Grant. The property butts up against the southwest portion of Matthiessen State Park and south of route 71 just west of the Matthiessen Lake Shelter entrance. The site was once the location of the Lone Star Mining Company/Quarry. Plans are in motion to create recreational opportunities within the area. It is currently closed and off limits. There are rich limestone outcrops filled with fossils on site that some college groups are allowed to receive permits to study.

### **Ecology**

The flora and fauna found at Matthiessen State Park are for the most part the same as those found at Starved Rock State Park. White Pelicans and Common Water Snakes will be found at Starved Rock but will not choose Matthiessen as suitable habitat due to its distance from the Illinois River.



### **History**

Matthiessen State Park, as with many other beautiful features of the Illinois River Valley, was the result of the generosity of philanthropist Frederick Matthiessen.

Frederick Matthiessen was born in Denmark in 1835, and had four brothers. His father died during his childhood days. Matthiessen went to the School of Mines in Freiberg, Germany, where he met his longtime friend and eventual business partner, Edward Hegler. Together, they developed an interest in zinc smelting, which requires large quantities of coal. They had formulated a new technique for zinc smelting in Pennsylvania, but their company did not have

enough money to continue, and the endeavor was eventually abandoned. Matthiessen and Hegler next turned their sights to Missouri and Wisconsin to start another zinc processing plant.

The two businessmen were eventually drawn to the Illinois River Valley for its abundance of coal. There, in LaSalle, they broke ground for the Matthiessen and Hegler Zinc Company on Christmas Eve of 1858, later to be incorporated in 1871. Their company became a success from all of the zinc shipped in on the railroads from Wisconsin. They went on to invent and patent many things, such as the rotary gas furnace, the electric smelting furnace, and a similar smelting technique for aluminum, which is still in use today.

After becoming established in the Illinois River Valley, Frederick Matthiessen married Fannie Moeller in 1864, in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Together, they had five children: Emma, C.Henry, Adele, Frederick Jr., and Otto.

The family had two homes: one on Ninth Street in LaSalle, and the other at Deer Park. The Deer park home, or the “Big House,” was a large, 51 room, three story mansion. Also on the Deer Park property was a smaller 17 room mansion that belonged to Adele and her husband, and other buildings including a tool shed, a cottage, a heated four car garage, and homes for the caretakers of the property. The compound had its own electric power plant, sewer system, wells and even a private fire station. Nearly fifty men were employed to make trails and bridges throughout Deer Park. The Matthiessen property grew to over 1600 acres and extended to the Illinois River.

Frederick Matthiessen made many generous and meaningful contributions to the communities of LaSalle, Peru, and Oglesby during his lifetime. One of his most important was the building and founding of LaSalle-Peru High School, of which he served as the president of the school board in 1897. He donated the land on which the school was built, furnished the building at his own expense, and led the building of many of the school’s landmark features, including the science department, gym, and athletic fields. In total, it was estimated that he donated \$228,000 to the school alone.

Another important contribution by Frederick Matthiessen was his time serving as the mayor of LaSalle. His first action as mayor was to pay off \$46,000 in town debts with his own money. He also donated nearly \$30,000 towards town infrastructure, including a new water pump, new sewers, and the electric light plant. He also gave \$23,000 to pay for the Shippings Port Vermillion River Bridge.

Matthiessen helped save many local businesses from bankruptcy. Among the businesses he helped were the LaSalle and Bureau County Railway, the LaSalle Machine and Tool Company, and the Western Clock Company or Westclox. Westclox went on to produce some of

the best clocks in the world, creating a standard by which the production of many clocks is still measured today. To provide health care, Matthiessen built the Tri-City Hygienic Institute in 1914, and he also built a hospital and set aside \$10,000 for a medical library.

Frederick Matthiessen died in 1918. After his death, Deer Park was renamed Matthiessen State Park in his honor. Some of the original property was sold, and the state took possession of most of the land, after which Matthiessen State Park was opened as a public park. The small mansion that had belonged to his daughter Adele was sold to R.W. Conkey, and then later to the Illinois Department of Conservation, which used it as a training center. It was destroyed by a controlled fire in the fall of 1981. The “Big House” was torn down in the fall of 1979. All that remains of the houses today is a wall, grape arbor, and one of the cottages.

### **HALFWAY HOUSE, SULPHUR SPRINGS HOTEL**



Built in 1852 by Joel Smith the “old stone” house on Dee Bennett road just north of Starved Rock State Park on the shores of the Illinois River stands 4 stories tall built of sandstone from the area. Also known as the “Half-way House” due to its location on the stage coach route in the mid 1800’s or the Sulphur Spring Hotel because of the rich medicinal springs in the area.

Joel Smith bought the property for \$399 and built the house due to the medicinal properties found in the springs of the area. The house was used as a hostel/hotel and called the Sulphur Springs House. It was used as a health resort for patrons to take medicinal baths in the sulfur springs located on the grounds.

The original building housed 12 guest rooms on the third floor, while on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor there was a ballroom with a theatre. Such world renowned entertainers as Ole Bull the violinist, Adelina Patti, and Jenni Lind graced the ball room lit by the glow of four fireplaces, while guests on the first floor enjoyed a game or two of poker as they threw back drinks from the bar. Supposedly (but never proven) Abraham Lincoln occupied a northeast room on the second floor at one time.

The property was sold in 1862 to J. Buell whose daughter turned the first floor into a school for a few years. The property was then purchased as a private residence by Ben Danner, then Henry Zimmerman in 1902. During this time the house and property served as a quiet

family farmhouse. Rumors of the house serving as a stop on the underground railroad have circulated but have never been proven.

The interurban railroad from Chicago to Utica to Peoria passed by the front door of the Halfway House for over thirty years as visitors made their way to Starved Rock State Park or Buffalo Rock State Park.

The land that the “Halfway House” was built on is also known as the “Zimmerman Site” where the largest concentration of Native Americans in the Midwest once occurred between the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, known as the Grand Village of the Kaskaskia.

Three archaeological excavations have been completed on the grounds and you can view the artifacts at the LaSalle County Historical Society Museum in Utica, Illinois.

The house still stands today and is owned by the state of Illinois/Illinois Department of Natural Resources. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.



## **THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr>

### **Mission Statement**

To manage, conserve and protect Illinois' natural, recreational, and cultural resources, further the public's understanding and appreciation of those resources, and promote the education, science and public safety of Illinois' natural resources for present and future generations.

IDNR for short, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources contains 16 different offices including the Office of Land Management which oversees and maintains state parks, state fish and wildlife areas, state trails, state campgrounds, state recreational areas, state nature preserves, and state historic sites. Website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr>

## **STARVED ROCK AND MATTHIESSEN COMPLEX**

### **Acreage**

Margery C. Carlson Nature Preserve	249
Sandy Ford Nature Preserve	203
Mitchells Grove Nature Preserve	185
2018 Annex/Matthiessen	2629
Matthiessen State Park	1936
Starved Rock State Park	3205
Grand Village of the Kaskaskia/Halfway House	90

## **Park Staff**

Site Superintendent (1)	Alvin Harper (2020)
Assistant Superintendent	TA/Monty Bernardoni (1991)
Natural Resource Coordinator (1)	Lisa Sons (2017)
Office Coordinator (1)	Billie Kellerhuis (2019)
Ranger (2)	TA/Rick Thiesen
	Henry Kleiber (1981)
Site Technicians (6)	
Site Security (1)	

## **Starved Rock Visitor Center**

The present-day Starved Rock Visitor Center is located off of the west entrance of the park from route 178 just past the boat ramp and lower parking -picnic area. Construction began in November of 2000 and the visitor center opened for business on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2002 at the cost of \$2.1 million dollars. The center matches the overall aesthetic of the Starved Rock Lodge with its cedar shingle siding, wooden beams, and cathedral like ceilings. Inside visitors will find restrooms, water fountains, vending machines, Lodge owned and operated concession stand known as Trailheads, and the Interpretive Center which is owned and operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

The Interpretive Center contains a variety of exhibits showcasing various dioramas, displays, archives, and artifacts related to the history, geology, and ecology of the Starved Rock region. A movie theater is located next to the front desk where various films about the park can be requested by park visitors like *The Shadow of the Rock* (history and geology), *Civilian Conservation Corps at Starved Rock*, *Smoky the Bear and Friends*, *Wings of the Wind* (bald eagles), *Orientation* (short overview of the park's features and trails).

Open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. the Interpretive Center provides area information, trail maps, and general park information to visitors passing through. The Natural Resource

Coordinator on site manages the visitor center exhibits, information, interpretive panels, movies, programs, events, field trips, tours, and wildlife exhibits such as the bird feeding stations and aquarium.

The aquarium is one of the main features in the exhibit hall at the visitor center. It is a 350 gallon tank recently refurbished thanks to funds from the IDNR's Office of Resource Conservation and the Starved Rock Foundation in July of 2021. The IDNR's Fisheries Biologist provided native fish such as sunfish and darters to form a community tank for visitors to enjoy.

## **Park Maintenance**

Park Maintenance is located just across the road from the visitor center. Two of the original Civilian Conservation Corps barracks are still used today as a wood shop and a storage warehouse.

There are several shelters located at both parks. Starved Rock shelters are located in the picnic area between the visitor center and boat ramp as well as Lone Point Shelter located off of route 71 at the east end of the park. Matthiessen shelters are located at the Vermillion River Access Area which is the second entrance heading south on route 178 away from Starved Rock State Park and the Fort Shelter located at the Dells entrance of Matthiessen State Park.

Starved Rock contains 13 miles of trails from west to east and is flanked by route 178 on the west and route 71 on the south. There are several parking lots located throughout the park: St. Louis Canyon, LaSalle Canyon/Parkman's Plain, Hennepin Canyon, Ottawa Canyon, Illinois Canyon, Lone Point Shelter, Overflow, Lodge, Boat Ramp Area, and the Lower Area parking lot by the Visitor Center.

Wooden boardwalks installed at Starved Rock:

- |                               |         |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| • Starved Rock Deck           | 1981    |
| • Original Overlook Decks     | 1982    |
| • Lovers Leap and Eagle Cliff | 1997-99 |
| • Wildcat Canyon              | 1999    |

Starved Rock State Park operates a 133 site/Class A campground just south of the park's entrance off of route 71. Sites are suitable for both tent and RV camping with a mixture of shade, partial shade, and full sun options to choose from. The campground comes with two shower buildings, dump station, water hydrants, a shelter, and a youth group camping area. The Campground Store is owned and operated by the Starved Rock Lodge. Camping reservations are made online at <https://camp.exploremoreil.com>

Matthiessen State Park contains over 11 miles of trails for visitors to utilize, between hiking, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and horseback riding trails (no horse rental in the area/bring your own). A horseback campground is located on site.

### **Present Day Starved Rock Lodge and Concessions**

The Starved Rock Lodge is a separate entity from the IDNR. The property and building is leased from the state by a private concessionaire who operates the lodging, cabins, restaurant, trolley tours, and boat tours. There are 69 hotel rooms and 17 cabins on site for reservations. The Lodge operates boat and trolley tours as well. <https://www.starvedrocklodge.com>

## **THE STARVED ROCK FOUNDATION**

[StarvedRockFoundation@gmail.com](mailto:StarvedRockFoundation@gmail.com)

[www.starvedrock.org](http://www.starvedrock.org)

Established in 1991, the Starved Rock Historical and Educational Foundation is dedicated to the preservation of the area's natural heritage and advancement of educational programming at Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks.

The Foundation is a non-profit 501©3 tax-exempt organization. The Foundation leases the Le Rocher Gift Store at the park's visitor center. The store is completely volunteer operated and all proceeds stay in the park to help purchase program and event supplies, bird seed, fish food, interpretive panels, exhibits, displays, and educational presenters.

Anyone can join the Starved Rock Foundation and yearly membership ranges from \$15 (individual) to \$500 (corporation). Further information and membership can be found on the Foundation's website at [www.starvedrock.org](http://www.starvedrock.org) and [starvedrockfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:starvedrockfoundation@gmail.com)

The Starved Rock Foundation board meets every other month at the Starved Rock Visitor Center. Board members include:

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| • President                                 | Pamela Grivetti |
| • Vice President                            | Terry Warren    |
| • Treasurer                                 | Paul Marincic   |
| • Assistant Treasurer                       | Cheryl Barto    |
| • Special Event & Annual Dinner Coordinator | Ron Sons        |
| • Park Historian                            | Mark Walczynski |
| • Assistant Special Event Coordinator       | Cindy Hopps     |
| • Membership                                | Arnold Leder    |
| • Bookstore Manager                         | Daniel MacNamee |

Supplemental material on history, geology, and ecology that may help with guided hike knowledge: All can be found at the Le Rocher bookstore or various similar titles for loan at the park office library.

- **Sharing Nature with Children**, by Joseph Cornell (Lisa and the Park Office have copies to loan out)
- **Interpreting for Park Visitors**, by William J. Lewis
- **Interpreting our Heritage**, Freeman Tilden
- **Personal Interpretation**, Lisa Brochu and Tim Merriman
  
- **The History of Starved Rock**, Mark Walczynski
- **Inquietus**, LaSalle in the Illinios Country, Mark Walczynski
- **Massacre 1769: The Search for the Origin of the Legend of Starved Rock**, Mark Walczynski
- **Starved Rock State Park, The First 100 Years**, Mark Walczynski
- **Hiker and Visitor Guide to Starved Rock State Park**, Mark Walczynski
- **Starved Rock State Park, The Work of the CCC Along the I & M Canal**, Dennis H. Cremin and Charlene Giardina
- **Illinois and Michigan Canal**, David A. Belden
- **Time Talks, The Geology of Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks**, by Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Geological Survey
- **Tree Finder** by May Theilguard Watts
- **Animal Tracks Illinois**, Tamara Eder
- **Field Guide to Birds**, Roger Tory Peterson
- **Illinois Wildflowers**, by Don Kurz
- **Mushrooms and Other Fungi of the Midcontinental United States**, by Huffman, Tiffany, Knaphus, and Healy.